DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 808 PS 028 421

AUTHOR Marcon, Rebecca A.
TITLE Impact of Preschool Model on Educational Transitions from Early Childhood to Middle Childhood and into Early Adolescence.
PUB DATE 2000-04-16
NOTE 11p.; Poster presented at the Conference on Human Development (Memphis, TN, April 16, 2000). For earlier reports from this study, see EJ 582 451, EJ 493 650, and EJ 458 104.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Blacks; Early Experience; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; *Followup Studies; Grade Repetition; Low Income; *Outcomes of Education; *Preschool Education; Special Education; Student Adjustment; Student Placement
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; Project Head Start

ABSTRACT

A follow-up study of 152 children enrolled in 66 urban schools was conducted at the end of the children's eighth year in school to determine any continuing influence of preschool experiences on later educational transitions. All children had attended both pre-kindergarten/Head Start and kindergarten prior to first grade entry. The sample was 97 percent African American; 60 percent were female. Eighty-five percent of the children qualified for subsidized lunch based on low family income, and 71 percent lived in single parent families. No differences attributable to the preschool model were found in rates of special education placements in third or sixth grades or in retention prior to third grade, or following third, fourth, or sixth grades. Overly academic early learning experiences were associated with reduced success in transitioning from the early childhood grades to the middle childhood grades. Children whose first school experience was a didactic, academically-focused preschool showed the greatest decline on standardized measures of school achievement between third and sixth grades. The long-term positive benefits of more active, child-initiated early learning experiences were clearly demonstrated in the middle childhood grades. However, all children regardless of type of early learning experience appeared to have some transitional difficulty as they entered the early adolescent grades. (Contains 11 references.) (Author/HTH)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 439 808

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Impact of Preschool Model on Educational Transitions from Early Childhood to Middle Childhood and into Early Adolescence

Rebecca A. Marcon

University of North Florida

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Rebecca A. Marcon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Poster session presented April 16, 2000, at the Conference on Human Development, Memphis, TN. Address correspondence to Rebecca A. Marcon, Department of Psychology, University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL 32224. email: rmarcon@unf.edu (904) 620-2807

PS 028421

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

A follow-up study of 152 children (M age = 143.2 months) enrolled in 66 urban schools was conducted at the end of children's eighth year in school to determine any continuing influence of preschool experiences on later educational transitions. All children had attended both pre-kindergarten/Head Start and kindergarten prior to first grade entry. The sample was 97% African American and 60% female. Most children (85%) qualified for subsidized lunch based on low family income and 71% lived in single parent families. No differences attributable to preschool model were found in rates of special education placements in third or sixth grades or in retention prior to third grade, following third, fourth, or sixth grades. Overly academic early learning experiences were associated with reduced success in transitioning from the early childhood grades to the middle childhood grades. Children whose first school experience was a didactic, academically-focused preschool showed the greatest decline on standardized measures of school achievement between third and sixth grades. The long-term positive benefits of more active, child-initiated early learning experiences were clearly demonstrated in the middle childhood grades. However, all children regardless of type of early learning experience appeared to have some transitional difficulty as they entered the early adolescent grades.

Impact of Preschool Model on Educational Transitions from Early Childhood to Middle Childhood and into Early Adolescence

Although research supports the benefits of quality early education programs for children from low-income families (e.g., Lazar, Darlington, Murray, Royce, & Snipper, 1982), not all curriculum models currently in use would be considered developmentally appropriate and some experts (e.g., Elkind, 1986; Zigler, 1986) fear inappropriate methods may be detrimental to future learning motivation. Furthermore, longitudinal studies (e.g., Miller & Bizzell, 1984; Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993) have found preschool didactic models to have long-term negative consequences for adolescent social behavior and school achievement. It can no longer be assumed that any preschool curriculum will achieve positive results (Powell, 1987).

The present research was a follow-up study of children in a large urban school district that had implemented universal pre-kindergarten with eligibility determined solely by age and residency. Based on earlier findings of differential effects of three preschool models on development and early skills acquisition in three cohorts of 4-year-olds (Marcon, 1992, 1994, 1999), policy makers began to encourage more developmentally appropriate practices in the early childhood grades. This current study examined the continuing influence of preschool experiences on educational transitions from the end of the early childhood grades to the end of middle childhood grades and the beginning of early adolescent grades. For many children the transition from early to middle childhood grades is cognitively difficult because of increased expectations for independent thought and mastery of more difficult concepts. The transition from

middle childhood to early adolescent grades can also be socially difficult as peer groups expand and maturity demands increase.

Method

Participants

A sample of 152 children (M age = 143.2 months) enrolled in 66 urban schools was studied at the end of children's eighth year in school (all had attended both pre-kindergarten/Head Start and kindergarten prior to first grade entry). The sample was 97% African American and 60% female. Most children (85%) qualified for subsidized lunch based on low family income and 71% lived in single parent homes. Since first studied, one-third had been retained and 11% had received special education services.

Preschool Models

Three different preschool models were previously identified using cluster analysis of teacher responses to the 14-item "Pre-K Survey of Beliefs and Practices" (Marcon, 1987, 1988). Model CI teachers represented an active, *child-initiated* approach to early learning; Model AD teachers ran more didactic, *academically directed* programs with direct teacher instruction; and Model M teachers fell in-between the other two models and endorsed more *middle-of-the-road* beliefs and practices (see Marcon, 1999, for complete description of scale development, scoring, clustering procedures, and scale psychometrics).

Measures

Repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) contrasted academic performance of children from the three preschool models using student report cards

(third and sixth grades), normal curve equivalent scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) administered system-wide in third and sixth grades, rates of retention in grade, and rates of special education placement. Seventh grade data were limited by deficiencies in schools' record keeping in the early adolescent grades and postponement of system-wide standardized achievement testing until the end of the early adolescent grades. The covariate used to control for possible economic differences between children was eligibility for subsidized lunch.

Results

No significant differences attributable to preschool model were found in rates of special education placement in third or sixth grades or in retention prior to third grade, following third, fourth, or sixth grades.

Report Cards

As shown in Figure 1, Model CI children were generally more successful in the transition from the end of early childhood grades (third grade) to the end of middle childhood grades (sixth grade). ANCOVA was used to examine preschool model x year interactions. Significant differences favoring Model CI were found for overall grade point average (GPA), F (2, 148) = 4.21, $p < .05$, as well as grades in language, F (2, 146) = 4.65, $p = .01$, spelling, F (2, 142) = 3.67, $p < .05$, science, F (2, 146) = 3.13, $p < .05$, and health/PE, F (2, 123) = 3.35, $p < .05$. A similar trend toward significance favoring Model CI was found for reading, F (2, 143) = 2.75, $p < .07$, and handwriting, F (2, 140) = 2.31, $p = .10$, with a possible difference noted in mathematics grades, F (2, 146) = 2.15, $p = .12$. As seen in Figure 2, transition to the early

adolescent grades was associated with an overall general decline in academic performance. However, no significant preschool model x year interactions were found for seventh grade GPA (p = .98) or any subject areas.

Insert Figures 1 and 2 about here

CTBS Scores

Performance on standardized achievement tests generally declined from early to middle childhood as seen in the significant drop in sixth grade CTBS total battery scores, F (1, 152) = 19.74, p < .001. As shown in Figure 3, Model AD children showed the largest decline compared to peers in all areas except spelling, mathematics concepts, and social studies. A significant preschool model x year interaction was found for spelling, F (1, 152) = 3.79, p < .05. A trend toward significance was found to favor Model CI in language expression, F (2, 155) = 2.30, p = .10, with a possible difference also noted for Model CI total language CTBS scores, F (2, 155) = 2.06, p = .13.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Discussion

Overly academic early learning experiences were associated with reduced success in transitioning from the early childhood grades to the middle childhood grades. Furthermore, children whose first school experience was a didactic,

academically-focused preschool showed the greatest decline on standardized measures of school achievement between third and sixth grades. The long-term positive benefits of more active, child-initiated early learning experiences were clearly demonstrated in the middle childhood grades. However, all children regardless of type of early learning experience appeared to have some transitional difficulty as they entered the early adolescent grades. Additional follow-up research is planned to identify any continuing influence of preschool experience on students' progress through the early adolescent grades.

References

Elkind, D. (1986). Formal education and early childhood education: An essential difference. Phi Delta Kappan, 67, 631-636.

Lazar, I., Darlington, R., Murray, H., Royce, J., & Snipper, A. (1982). Lasting effects of early education: A report from the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 47 (2-3, Serial No. 195).

Marcon, R. (1987). Early learning and early identification study: 1986-87. Washington, DC: District of Columbia Public Schools.

Marcon, R. (1988, August). Cluster analysis: Creating independent variables in evaluation research. Poster session presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Atlanta.

Marcon, R. (1992). Differential effects of three preschool models on inner-city 4-year-olds. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 7, 517-530.

Marcon, R. (1994). Doing the right thing for children: Linking research and policy reform in the District of Columbia Public Schools. Young Children, 50 (1), 8-20.

Marcon, R. (1999). Differential impact of preschool models on development and early learning of inner-city children: A three-cohort study. Developmental Psychology, 35, 358-375.

Miller, L. B., & Bizzell, R. P. (1984). Long-term effects of four preschool programs: Ninth-and-tenth-grader results. Child Development, 55, 1570-1587.

Powell, D. R. (1987). Comparing preschool curricula and practices: The state of research. In S. L. Kagan & E. F. Zigler (Eds.), Early schooling: The national debate (pp. 190-211). New Haven: Yale University Press.

Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H., & Weikart, D. P. (1993). Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 27. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

Zigler, E. (1987). Formal schooling for four-year-olds? No. American Psychologist, 42, 254-260.

Figure 1

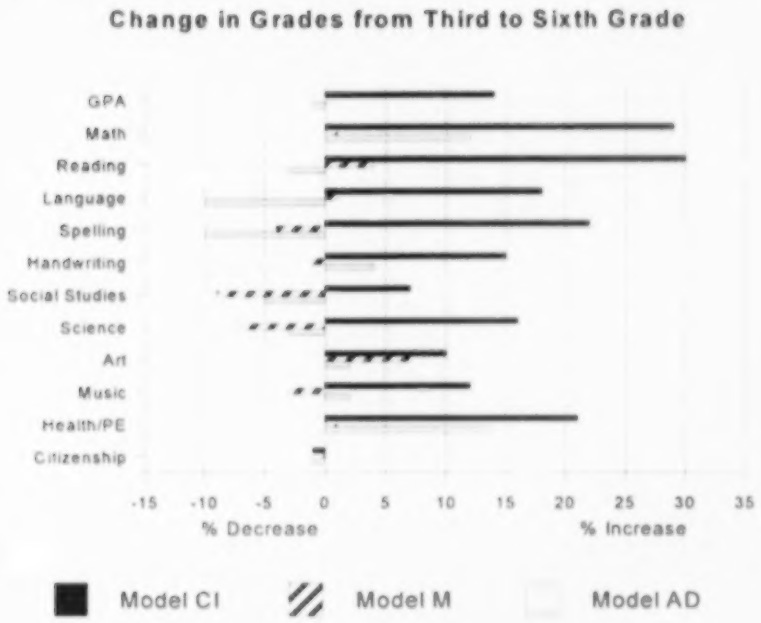


Figure 2

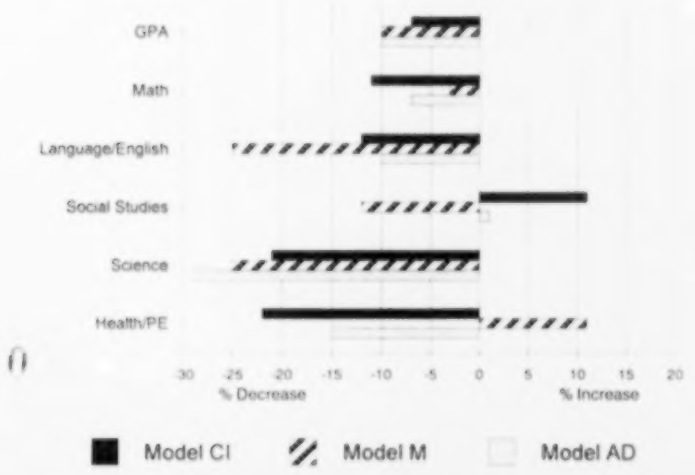
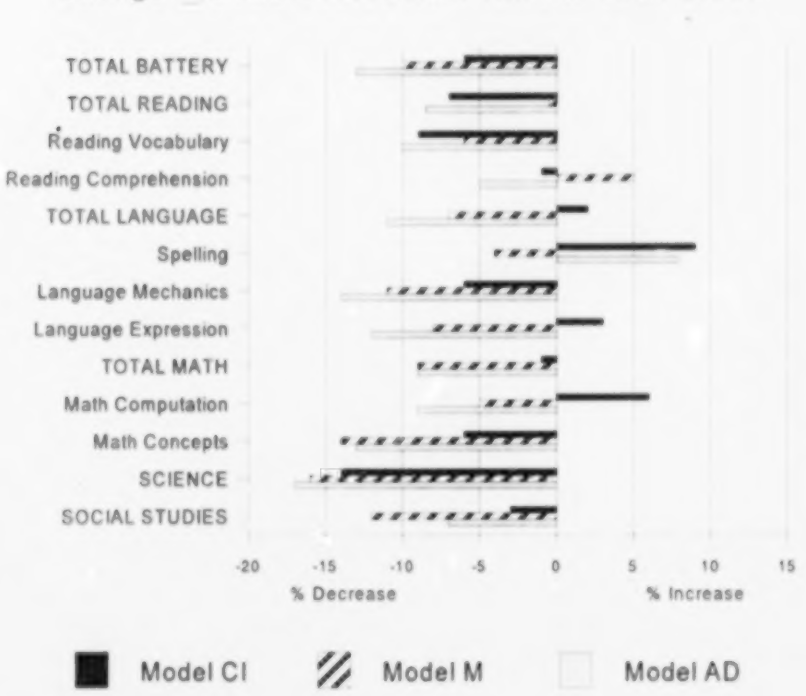


Figure 3



BEST COPY AVAILABLE